

Elmore County beef school provides research-based knowledge for local ranchers

AT A GLANCE

UI Extension provides Elmore County beef producers with important lessons on safe vaccine handling, genetics and breeding stock selection, and providing cattle with correct selenium levels.

The Situation

Historically, University of Idaho Extension programming in Elmore County has focused heavily on crops and horticulture. County beef producers have traveled long distances in the state to attend various UI Extension beef schools and other cattle-related seminars. Elmore County commissioners approached the local UI Extension educator about providing more Extension programming for local beef producers. Additionally, a prominent county cow-calf producer brought it to the educator's attention that local soils were deficient in selenium and that this mineral deficiency was carrying over into forages and causing white-muscle disease in her family's cattle herd.

Our Response

Extension Educator Joel Haas reached out to his colleagues, who partnered with him to organize a UI Extension Beef School for Elmore County. We were able to arrange for use of the exhibit hall at the Elmore County Fairgrounds in Glenns Ferry as a venue for the event. Our partner organization for this event was the King Hill Grange, whose volunteers provided dinner for seminar attendees.



Extension Educator Joel Haas teaching about symptoms of selenium deficiency.

Extension Educator Cindy Kinder gave a presentation called "Chute-side Confidence," in which she taught key quality assurance lessons around managing needles and vaccines to reduce injection-site related damage to beef cattle carcasses. Extension Specialist Benton Glaze presented "Inheritance and Relationship of Beef Cattle Traits," which provided producers with the scientific background on how genetic heritability works along with how to apply this knowledge in a practical manner for selecting bulls and replacement heifers for their herds. Educator Haas presented "Preventing Selenium Deficiency in Cattle," a lesson focused on spotting selenium deficiency symptoms and ensuring that range cattle were receiving correct levels of this key nutrient.

Program Outcomes

The first Beef School in Elmore County drew 10 youth and adult participants from across two counties. Participants filled out a pre/post survey asking about the current topics and possible future topics.

The survey included 16 Likert scale questions focused on the three talks presented: Management of livestock needles and vaccines, cattle genetic traits and nutrient deficiencies. Attendees were asked to rate their level of knowledge of each topic before and after participation in the workshop and how likely they were to use any of the information they learned.

Overall, survey results showed increases in knowledge across all topics presented, with participants' average self-reported knowledge increasing from a mean of 2.2 prior to the program to an estimated mean of approximately 3.9 following the program.

In addition, survey results indicated that a majority of participants planned to use the information presented in their own operations. The management practices that attendees indicated that they were mostly likely to adapt were principles of vaccine use and handling, injection location, needle management and vaccine temperature management.

Furthermore, the evaluation data suggests there is a strong need and interest for future workshops and educational opportunities based around beef cattle production for Elmore County. The top three topics of interest included Feeds and Feeding; Marketing of Livestock; and Genetics.

Participants provided comments that affirmed the value and practical application of the local beef school. One participant stated that “this was a great class, you put a lot into an evening.” Another individual wrote, “Liked all three topics and speakers. Good information that is usable on the ranch.”

Table 1. Average before and after score of knowledge gain from attending Elmore County beef school.

Topics	Before	After
Needle management	2.58	3.92
Injection location	2.92	4.17
Vaccine use and handling	2.58	4.17
Vaccine storage temperature monitoring	2.42	4.17
Symptoms of selenium deficiency	2.17	4.00
How to prevent selenium deficiency	2.00	3.92

The Future

Future beef school sessions are being planned to be held in Elmore County this coming winter. Feedback obtained from attendees and other local cattle producers will be used to determine topics. Additional speakers have agreed to present at these upcoming sessions.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

King Hill Grange 162 provided dinner for this event.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Joel Haas, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Elmore County • 208-587-2136 • jhaas@uidaho.edu

Cindy A. Kinder, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Camas/Gooding County • 208-934-4417 • ckinder@uidaho.edu

Benton Glaze, Extension Specialist • University of Idaho Twin Falls Research and Extension Center • 208-736-3638 • bglaze@uidaho.edu

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